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ABSTRACT

The Loop College's Individual Needs (IN) Program is a total support service and academic program for high-risk students during their first semesters at the college. This descriptive report begins by describing IN's personnel requirements and the duties of the program director, the program advisor, the senior tutor/Developmental Learning Manager (DLM), and six full-time and two part-time DLM's. The following section considers the traits which characterize an effective teacher of non-traditional students, the grading strategy used in IN, course design, and the use of audio-visual materials. With regard to the IN curricula, the report discusses restrictions on course load and selection (students take no more than 12 units and are required to take developmental courses focusing on communications skills and individual development), block programming, scheduling considerations, and modified registration procedures. Support services, including peer-level tutoring, personalized supplementary instruction, intensive study skills training, and peer-reinforcement in tutoring, are also discussed in this section. The final section of the report focuses on the student-centered aspects of IN, i.e., assessment activities during registration to identify prospective IN students, the voluntary nature of IN, appropriate learning strategies, realistic advisement, and career counseling. (AYC)

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THE LOOP COLLEGE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS (IN) PROGRAM:

An Analysis of its Success and

A Guide to the Implementation or Adaptation of its Techniques

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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The Loop College
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The Loop College Individual Needs (IN) Program: An Analysis of Its Success and a Guide to the Implementation or Adaptation of Its Techniques

by

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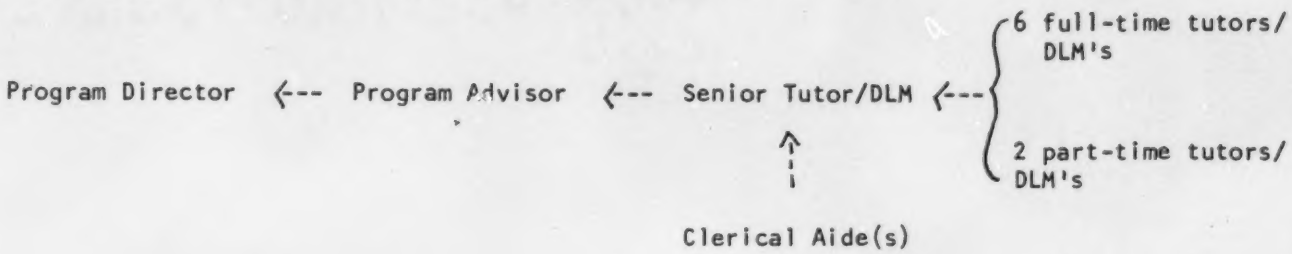
A retention rate of 91% for the highest risk students at the college. Over 90% student freedom from academic probation. More than 80% of first semester, high-risk freshmen committing themselves to specific career and academic programs with specific majors. These statistics constitute the success story of The Loop College's Individual Needs (IN) Program during the last three years of its operation. IN is a total support service and academic program for high-risk and other non-traditional students during their first semesters at The Loop College. The program was developed to address and solve the specific problems of high drop-out rates among freshmen, poor academic preparation for traditional college and vo-tech curricula, poor study habits and communication skills, weak student self-concept (student belief that they cannot succeed as college students), and unrealistic academic/career expectations. There is nothing surprising to the community college educator about this litany of trouble areas. What this report hopes to show is that these problems can be solved with careful planning, collegial cooperation, and systematic thinking by an institution that chooses to commit itself and its resources to meeting the individual needs of all the students that walk through its doors.

The model used to structure the program is rhetorical, centering on the successful activities that can be performed in the classical rhetorical areas of Speaker (TEACHER), Speech (CURRICULA and SUPPORT SERVICES), and Audience (STUDENTS). Each of the activities described below has been determined to be

integral to IN's success.

Before we examine the program activities in detail under these three headings, it will be useful to describe briefly the organization and staffing of the program, including current expenditures. I will incorporate suggestions for alternative procedures throughout this report after specifying the existing strategy employed at our college. The following chart details the overall staff structure and is followed by a description of the job responsibilities of each staff member:



The Program Director (PD) is a faculty member from one of the college's academic departments (at Loop, English). The PD oversees the program's operation, designs the academic block programs for each IN student, prepares reports for program evaluations--both external and internal, helps conduct orientation activities for new students to acquaint them with the program, cuts through red tape by acting as liaison with the services and departments at the college, and makes recommendations to the appropriate administrators at the college (at Loop, the Vice President for Instruction) on program needs. It is strongly recommended that the PD be drawn from the regular faculty rather than be hired from the outside on "hard" or "soft" money. The regular faculty member has (or should have) a strong sense of the college's programs, resources, successful instructors. He or she should understand the students of the college and their needs. Outsiders require considerable time to learn the personality of an institution and are often viewed by members of the college staff with something less than enthusiasm. Funding for the PD's efforts can be accomplished in one of several ways: considering his/her time spent as part of the regular course load (at Loop, a Learning Laboratory assignment requiring approximately 2 hours or direct work

with students in the Program for each hour spent in a classroom), special faculty assignment for one or two semesters with an appropriate stipend in addition to regular teaching duties, or volunteer efforts (with an inevitable decrease in responsibilities assumed). In any case, the benefits obtained by having a regular faculty member in this position far outweigh the costs, as long as that person is dedicated to improving the quality of education and services received by the high-risk student.

The Program Advisor (PA) is the day-to-day manager of the program's activities. The PA should be expert in assessment procedures, advisement, and counseling. A minimum of an MA/MS in Psychology or Educational Counseling is required, along with good inter-personal skills and experience working with high-risk students. The PA oversees the student assessment activities (which will be described later under both SUPPORT SERVICES and STUDENT), oversees the formal monitoring of IN student's progress in their classes, and provides semester-long advisement in academic skills and behavior, making appropriate referrals to the Counseling Department. The ideal arrangement for providing the program with a PA is to have a member of the Counseling Department assigned full-time to the program. However, an effective PA can be hired on "soft" money as long as great care is taken in the interview procedure to determine the candidate's commitment to serving students with learning problems. At Loop, the PA was hired on "soft" money and has since been made part of the administrative staff.

The Senior Tutor/Developmental Learning Manager (SDLM) is responsible for assigning students to the appropriate DLM, for supervising the administration of the placement tests for incoming freshmen (one of the program's functions), for reviewing staff work sheets, and for tutoring and other DLM functions on a half-time basis.

The six full-time and two part-time DLM's provide peer tutoring, academic monitoring, and attendance control for 25 to 30 students each (15 for the

part-timers and Senior DLM). The DLM's also meet with IN instructors to work out appropriate tutoring strategies for the IN students in their classes. All the DLM's are funded with "soft money" (at Loop, the funds from the Disadvantaged Student Grant from the State of Illinois). Again, staff selection is important. The IN staff of DLM's all have AB degrees, and four have MA's as well. All but one have had at least three years' experience tutoring problem learners, and two have taught college. The qualities of personality in the staff will vary, but all should possess a strong commitment to service and should be free from prestige hang-ups which could interfere with their establishing successful peer tutoring relationships and successful subordinate-helper relationships with IN instructors.

At The Loop College, both the PD and PA are housed in the same office, and the DLM's work out of a small tutoring center called the IN Learning Laboratory that consists of 10 carrels and several long tables. The laboratory also utilizes several pieces of instructional hardware, including four Sargent-Welch Auto-tutor Systems (with appropriate learning programs), Bell and Howell Language Masters, Wards Scientific Company Solo-learn programs, and Center for the Humanities Study Skills programs with Singer Cara-mate Sound-slide projectors.

All staff members perform academic advisement during registration and work with IN instructors to develop individualized instructional materials using the resources of the laboratory and the Audio-Visual Center at the college. Staffers also receive periodic workshops from the PD and are expected to attend monthly meetings to review the performance of the Program. The approximate yearly budget of the Program is $89,000 (excluding the regular faculty salary of the PD), and the PA and DLM's work a 40 hour week, 50 weeks per year with two weeks paid vacation and full fringe benefits. Further details of staff operation will emerge as we analyze the success-producing activities of the Program under the headings mentioned earlier.

THE TEACHER

What traits characterize the successful teacher in a special assistance or developmental education program like IN? Perhaps Dr. John Roueche, the widely acclaimed theoretician on developmental education, best summarizes the kind of teacher who succeeds with the non-traditional student:

> ...the form of instruction (methodology and the like) may not be as important as the students' perceptions of the teacher's behavior and their perception that the teacher is helping the student to succeed. A teacher willing to develop materials, specify objectives and accommodate individual differences is simply showing his students that he is willing to make learning possible. More than this, he is indicating that he "cares" about his students to the extent that he is willing to go extra miles in an effort to help them succeed.
>
> (Overcoming Learning Problems, Jossey-Bass, 1977, p. 119)

To these traits I would add the following: a willingness to understand and work against the failure-centered behavior exhibited by high-risk students; and the desire to utilize and help develop the support services available to students on campus. Let's look more specifically at the ways in which these "teachers-as-helper" attitudes are manifest in the day-to-day experiences of Loop's IN students.

The ideal IN Program instructor exhibits to his/her classes a sincere interest in learning the names of the students as quickly as possible, usually within the first week. The teacher presents the students with a well-designed, clearly-explained course curriculum and an equitable grading policy clearly grounded in student improvement and effort. The teacher will learn the students' interests and refer to them during the course to humanize the instruction process. Student attendance is humanely mandated, and the teacher will work hard to track down students who stop attending to bring them back to class. IN faculty have used devices ranging from home phone calls to a personal appeal to the class friends of an absent student to bring that student back into the fold. In general, the successful, caring teachers in the IN Program will not let students' failure-

centered behavior--the missing texts and supplies, absence from key assignments, back row daydreaming or sleeping--interfere with an unrelenting effort to make these students assume responsibility for their actions and realize in the process that somebody does care whether or not they succeed in school. These teachers attack the notion that students have the right to fail. They turn aside the apparent rebuffs to their concern by failure addicts who are doing nothing more than saying "Hey, teacher, do you really care whether I make it or not?" Successful teachers will do what they can to make high-risk students see that what they do in class and at home does make a difference in academic performance and evaluation. We will examine the concept of "failure attitude" in more detail under the heading of THE STUDENT. Let us turn now to a techniqe in grading that is gaining support in the IN Program which assists the student to assume responsibility for classroom behavior.

The grading strategy is centered around the concept of "consequential action." Simply stated, every action in the classroom--from attendance to examinations--has a specific point value in the overall course grade. The students' course grade is based simply on their accumulated point totals, using traditional (and absolute) divisions such as 88 to 100 points = A, 78 to 87 = B, and so on. The students and not the instructor determine what grade level they will reach in the class. Extra work/extra point possibilities can be built into the system, and no curve is used or needed to establish equity for the entire class. This system has, along with effective instruction, contributed to 80 to 90% retention rates in high attrition classes such as Reading 125 and English 197 (review classes in reading and composition skills). The "affective realm" results of this system are to give students an immediate outcome or pay-off for an activity, to increase their feeling of control over those pay-offs, and to give them (and their DLM's) a clear picture of where they stand at any given point in the semester.

No grading system, however, can remedy a poorly designed course. Instructors who fail to give their students a clear idea of what is expected of them by the

end of the course do those students a disservice. IN courses, in general, are characterized by clearly-defined objectives and sequential activities leading to those objectives. Students are surveyed during and at the completion of their courses by the IN staff to determine their familiarity with the teacher's objectives. DLM's meet with the instructors for information on course content and expectations in order to serve their clients better. In three years of Program supervision, the PD has seen clearly that the most successful instructors of the Program are those with the clearly-stated, sequential, attainable course objectives. Students know what is expected of them in each stage of the course. Their success in the course in rooted in their achievement of competency at each successive stage of course work. It is obvious that innovative instructional strategies like Mastery Learning and competency-based instruction have been used successfully by IN faculty. But even the traditional lecture or question-answer formats can be employed successfully by instructors who understand the importance of clarity of purpose in their course design.

When a school is fortunate to have a vital support services system, the instructor again enters the picture as the focusing agent for the student in academic trouble. IN Program instructors are selected for continued participation in the Program by their willingness to work with the Program staff to provide maximum assistance for students with learning difficulties in either academic preparation or study habits. That cooperation with the staff consists of assessing IN student performance at several key points during the semester (3rd, 8th, and 15th weeks). This assessment is then analyzed by the PA, who calls in students in trouble and provides the extra reinforcement needed for an intensified student effort. At the instructor's request, the PA also arranges extra tutoring with the students' DLM's and encourages the students to use the learning supplement resources in the IN Learning Laboratory. Without the cooperation of the

instructor in this total effort, students would not receive maximum benefit from the school's resources during particularly troubling times during the semester, times that the students might decide to stop coming altogether. The instructor also works with the DLM's assigned to the students in his/her classes who will periodically visit the teacher to discuss the performance of particular problem students. The Program has been successful in no small way because each one of the resource personnel--from instructor to learning manager--keeps the interest of the students as the primary focus throughout the learning process. Each cooperates with the other in order to provide the best education possible for students who have had very few successful educational experiences in the past.

One final area of teacher involvement that characterizes the successful instructor of non-traditional students is use of audio-visual materials. In the IN Program several instructors have worked with the IN staff to develop or make available already developed instructional aids for the IN students in their classes. For example, two teachers of Reading 125 worked up a series of Bell and Howell Language Master vocabulary cards for all the vocabulary items in one of the 125 textbooks. A math instructor is currently developing problem pages with explanations on the lab's 3 M Sound Page Recorder system. A Speech instructor uses videotapes of student speeches for class analysis. Writing instructors have shown interest in a recently developed system of providing taped comments on student papers instead of the traditional panoply of red marks and cryptic comments. These actions are the marks of successful instruction everywhere. As Dr. Oscar Mink has demonstrated in this research, students learn better when instructors open more than one path to course content for their students. Audio-visual supplements do not have to be flashy or highly professional. The occasional use of a transparency with handwritten comments projected onto the fron wall is often enough, as long as the student feels the instructor is striving to make the course material more accessible. The impersonal use of glossy AV aids is just as counter-

productive as the boring reading of yellowed lecture notes to a sea of faceless heads.

In the recent survey of nearly a thousand colleges conducted by ACT, it is significant to note that over 75% of students retained beyond their first year indicated that the primary reason they stayed was because one or more of their teachers cared about them. In instructors succeed because they are concerned about their students, they show enthusiasm for what they are doing and the people they are doing it for, and they are willing to learn how to reach their students in order to teach them better.

THE CURRICULA AND SUPPORT SERVICE SYSTEM

As President James Manilla (Penn Valley Community College) noted before a group of developmental educators in Kansas City last year, "There's no one thing you can do to improve student success. You have to do a number of things and do them all right." Combining effective curriculum with an attending network of supportive services is an essential "thing" among the number of things that must be done right.

The IN Program employs two research-verified procedures in its student programming: (1) restricting non-traditional students to no more than 12 hours of credit in their first semester at the college; (2) selecting student programs from those courses in which they have some chance of succeeding, i.e., courses whose entry requirements are not greater than the students' capacity to perform. In addition, the Program uses block programming with reserved places in some courses and whole sections of other courses for IN students. Let us look at each of these more specifically.

The majority of community college students in the United States--over 70% according to the research data of Roueche and Mink--work more than 20 hours per

week. In addition, community college students are likely to be older, less secure financially, and more committed to family responsibilities than their 4-year college counterparts. When the additional burden of skill and learning habit deficiencies is present, we have to conclude that non-traditional community college students are being programmed for almost certain failure when they're placed in five or six course academic programs in their freshman year. The In Program rigorously adheres to a 12 hour maximum for its students (6 to 9 hours for part-timers). IN students, most of whom receive some sort of financial aid, do not objective to these restrictions. They meet minimum requirements for their benefits, accommodate their personal responsibilities, and still have time left in their schedules for counseling and tutoring assistance.

What kinds of courses constitute typical IN student programs? The simple answer of "courses in which they have a reasonable chance of success" is not enough. Student programs should be developmental--they should bring students to the requisite level of competency to pursue traditional college or vocational curricula. Hence, IN students enroll in an intensive program of skills development on both cognitive and verbal levels, they learn about themselves as learners, and they begin work in disciplines they've evidenced interest in as possible majors. In their freshman year of work, they not only acquire the facts and develop the necessary skills needed for further work, they also gain self-confidence and earn college transfer credit in the majority of cases as well.

There is no miracle in all of this. Instead there is intelligent curriculum design with credit that articulates with the majority of public, 4-year colleges and universities in the Midwest (and with an increasing number of private schools as well). The main component of a typical IN student program is a six hour block of credit in improving communication skills--Reading 125 (College Reading) and English 197 (a composition review course). To this is added a three hour block of credit in self-development courses--Pyschology 115 (The Psychology of Personal

Adjustment, 2 hours) and Counseling 101 (Educational and Vocational Counseling, 1 hour)--taught by the same instructor, a trained pyschologist. The final course to complete the typical 12 hour program is determined by the student's professed interest (or uncertainty) and score on the Nelson-Denny Reading Placement Test. A low score on the reading test usually results in the student being placed in a section of Social Science 105 (American Social Institutions--a course in basic facts for college students that is paired with Reading 125 and utilized the team effort of the two instructors to provide an integrated curriculum over two consecutive class periods with the same group of students). Since over 60% of our students evidence interest in Business as a major, we frequently use Business 141 (Business Mathematics) as our completer course. We also design programs with Math 103 (a math review course), Music 101 (an introduction to music course), Speech 101 (an introductory course to public speaking and group discussion which we usually reserve for students who score higher on the placement tests), and other placement test-related introductory courses. The key features of our students' programs are the concentration in communications skills development, attitude improvement work in the psychology course, and an introductory course in the student's major field or general introductory course if no major is clearly seen at the time of student entry. All twelve credit hours will be accepted by a four year public university if the student enters after completing AA degree work at our college (an incentive to students to stay at the community college for all their freshman and sophomore work). The students therefore earn college transfer credit while improving their survival ability in school, a major selling point to the students when we ask them to become part of the IN Program.

The value of having an intensive communications component in the students' program becomes obvious when we analyze more of Roueche's research findings. In his national survey of reading scores obtained by college freshmen on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Roueche learned that there has been a two grade drop in reading

ability in the last ten years. The average college freshman is reading at a grade level of 8.2, and the community college student is often below that. Yet almost all textbooks and manuals used in the nation's college classrooms, especially in vocational and technical programs, are written at the 12th grade level or higher. If students are more than two grade levels below the readability level of their textbooks, they will not be able to apprehend the information within. Thus, improving students' reading ability in their beginning course work is essential for their continued survival in school. And they can improve--as much as two or three grade levels after only one semester in a college reading program. Also, the principles of reading improvement acquired in that course will help the students continue to develop as they take further courses.

Mina Shaughnessy, in her acclaimed study of the writing problems of Basic Program freshmen at CCNY (Errors and Expectations, Oxford University Press, 1977), concluded that the source of non-traditional students' writing problems was simply an unfamiliarity with the act of writing. Writing was not an activity they had ever been called upon to do with any regularity, and they could not perform well in their college classes as a result. Her therapy, as Director of the Basic Writing Program, included massive doses of writing practice--as much as 2000 words per week for many of her students--to acquaint the students with the experience of writing. And her efforts showed results almost immediately. IN Program's instructors in English 197 are chosen, by and large, because they concur with the Shaughnessy principle that you only learn how to write by writing. The writing should be as practical as possible. In fact we're experimenting with a paired, six hour module of English 197 and Biology 101 for IN students who plan on majoring in one of the sciences or who have demonstrated reading abilities that exempt them from the 125 class. Both instructors in the combination class will coordinate their efforts for their students: the English instructor using Biology materials for assignments, the Biology instructor requiring much writing practice in and

outside of class. Similar experiments are planned with Speech 101 and Child Development 101, the former being paired with a writing course, the latter with Reading 125.

Our retention and academic success statistics indicate that our students and their curricula are well-matched. While we've had an occasional failure--a paired section of Business 111 and Reading 124 proved too difficult for most of the concurrently enrolled students--most of our curriculum planning has elicited student approval and instructor enthusiasm. We're particularly excited about a planned Humanities course (Humanities 107) for first semester, high-risk students for the coming semester. The course will provide a general introduction to the arts by emphasizing how we are persuaded by our popular culture artifacts--from movies to radio advertisements. Students will be encouraged to develop their judgemental capacities by becoming aware of their common-sense reasoning abilities and their own value systems. This kind of innovative interest shown by our faculty, interest that demonstrates their concern for providing curricula that meet the needs of the students who walk through our doors, implies rather strongly that there are untapped resources on every campus that need only be mined carefully in a cooperative college-wide effort to produce the wealth of increased student retention and improved academic success.

Since academic rejuvenation often needs more than a single semester, first term IN students have the opportunity of continuing in the Program for a second semester as well. They will receive 12 to 15 credit hour programs consisting of further communications training, usually a combined section of English 101 (Freshman Composition) and Reading 126 (Advanced College Reading)--the reading class emphasizes speed improvement, vocabulary development, and logic. Along with these classes the students begin their required core program with courses such as Social Science 101, Biology or Physical Science 101, Business 111 (for business majors), or Speech 101. IN students are eligible for tutoring help in these classes and

may return at any time during their stay at the college for advice or occasional tutoring assistance (if open time is available). IN's purpose is to ensure that its students are properly matriculated or certified, even after they've cut the formal ties with the Program that first helped them through their studies. To deny them service of some kind is to turn our back on people for whom IN has been the first positive educational experience in their lives.

The key to controlling student course load and selection is block programming, the specifics of which were worked out in cooperation with the college's registrar. The PD designs approximately 200 student programs once the new semester schedules are issued early in the prior semester. The PD uses as his guidelines for program design the following criteria: 1) most full-time students attend during the day, particularly the mid-morning; 2) over 60% of our students indicate an interest in Business or Data Processing as a major; 3) evening students score higher on the placement tests than do day students. The resulting set of student programs reflects these facts. The majority of the programs are in the morning; the Psychology/ Counseling course is offered at several times to accommodate both morning and afternoon programs (evening as well for the fall semester of 1980); several programs include sections of English 101/Reading 126 (see earlier description) for first-semester students who test out of Reading 125 and English 197 but fall just short of English 101 (cut-off scores are furnished by the English Department); most evening programs are part-time and include both Reading 125 and English 197 along with either Business 141, Social Science 105 (in paired section with Reading 125), or Math 103.

Since the college's registration is conducted manually using a system of individual class cards corresponding to available positions in classes, it was necessary for the PD to work out an arrangement for withdrawing his needed cards from the general registration cards and assigning them to IN students who would complete their registration in the Program offices separate from the general

session. (Having a regular faculty member as the PD again proved advantageous in smoothing out this arrangement, as both he and the registrar understood the intricacies of the local registration process and produced a workable plan.) A final part of the process involved the registrar's granting of special permission to the PD to request class cards during general registration itself for those programs that needed to be specially adapted to the student's individual needs (such as work schedules or family responsibilities). While these adaptations are discouraged, they are nonetheless inevitable and require special cooperation from the registration staff.

An effective network of SUPPORT SERVICES combines with well-planned CURRICULA in producing results such as those enjoyed by IN. Features of successful developmental education programs from around the country have been incorporated into the support service design of IN. These include peer-level tutoring--the DLM's range in age from mid-20's or mid-50's; personalized supplementary instruction--our auto-instructional resources in the Learning Laboratory are used to remedy specific skills/content deficiencies and are popular with the students (those who've experienced computer-assisted instruction through the University of Illinois's PLATO system say it is even better, but out college does not have a PLATO hook-up as yet); intensive study skills training--through weekly small group sessions with the PA; peer-reinforcement in tutoring--small group tutoring sessions often replace traditional one-on-one sessions when common problems are faced (an approach made possible by having students from the same class assigned to a single DLM throughout the semester).

As noted earlier, great care needs to be exercised in staff selection. People and not machinery are success-producing elements in an effective network of supportive services. If a tutor or counselor is perceived as a helper by the student, that student will benefit from the encounter with the staff member. Support staff should like people and be good in their dealings with others. This personality

characteristic is especially important in a program like IN where the staff is expected to form good working relationships with faculty and other college personnel as well as to act ans a "big brother/big sister" for IN students. The fact that the Program enjoys broad respect and acceptance by the rest of the college community attests to the success the staff has had in forming these relationships. There's no greater obstacle to a program's chances for success than for it to be perceived as an outside threat to the interests of the college community.

The IN staff administrators make major efforts to develop bonds of friendship and loyalty within the Program. Attempts to simplify the inevitable red tape attending such a program, to involve all staffers in policy decisions for the Program, to allow DLM's great freedom (as long as data-gathering is observed), to secure reasonable salaries for staff members, and to engage in frank and open exchanges of opinions during staff development sessions, all contribute to a high level of morale within the Program. The PD must establish clear lines of internal communication. When the inevitable personality problems arise, the PD can solve them by juggling of staff hours or closed door, face-to-face meetings before matters get out of control and affect morale. IN has been through its growing pains stage, has made mistakes in its internal working, and has emerged from the stage a stronger program because staff cohesiveness, openness, and pride have allowed the program to solve its own problems.

The last major area of supportive services that needs description is the assessment and advisement work of the Program Advisor, and this will serve as a transition into the final section of our overall analysis of IN, the STUDENTS. In addition to overseeing the day-to-day operation of the Program (with the help of the Senior DLM), the PA provides the services of self-concept diagnosis, study skills seminars, career aptitude diagnosis, academic and vocational advisement, and academic behavior critique/reinforcement based on the academic monitoring reports submitted by the DLM's. The PA is the principal agent outside the

classroom for helping students acquire the self-assurance and insight to make informed choices about their academic futures and vocational plans. The PA's work abuts the work performed by the college's Counseling Department, and it is essential that the two services work harmoniously. A counseling/psychology background is a must for the PA, and the individual occupying that position must work in close touch with the school's counseling staff, particulary to set up clear referral paths, to share pertinent information, and to avoid duplication of services to the students. As noted earlier, the ideal arrangement (which IN does not enjoy) would be to have a counselor assigned full-time to the duties of the Program. But let us now turn to the third and final major perspective from which the successful operations of the Program is being viewed--the STUDENTS--so that we can see the specific intent of having effective teaching, well-planned curricula, and appropriate supportive services working in harmony.

THE STUDENTS

All activities in the IN Program are ultimately student-centered. We want to know as much as we can about our students; thus we have to have effective assessment activities. We want our students to know as much as they can about us and what we have to offer in the academic environs of the college; hence we create appropriate learning strategies for them based on our understanding of who they are. Finally we want our students to know as much as they can about themselves and their potentialities; so we provide realistic advisement and ensure that they receive good career counseling.

Because early identification of potenial IN students is an ongoing problem in a school where late, walk-in registratants account for the main enrollment, the Program staff has experimented with a variety of strategies. The most successful to date involves a combination of orientation activities, placement testing, and the offer of an express registration procedure. Before we look at this procedure,

we need to emphasize here that IN students volunteer for the Program and its services. No one has to enter the college through IN, no matter how poor an academic record that person brings with him/her. Two hundred places are reserved each semester for IN students, and students have the option of choosing to occupy those places or enter the school through general registration. This initial request of a commitment from the students--which over 75% make during our orientation--serves as the psychological ploy our staff uses to get students to make other commitments to the Program (and themselves) throughout the semester; commitments to come in for regular tutoring, to improve study habits, to make realistic career decisions. While it's possible to have a mandates developmental or special assistance program that works, we have achieved comparable results in a purely voluntary program, and we've gotten a good jump on solving the students' persistent belief that they do not have control over their own futures. When they choose to become IN students, they are assuming responsibility for succeeding in college...and we never let them forget that while they are with us.

Before we can do anything for our students, they need to know about our Program and to commit themselves to it. This initial contact is made at a series of new student orientation sessions held prior to registration for new students. The college's Office of Admissions invites all students who have indicated any interest in the college to attend the orientation meetings, and the Counseling Department (now assisted by the IN staff) runs the session. The PD is one of the featured speakers and makes a high-powered presentation about the Program's many benefits--including a personalized registration separate from general registration (which is characterized as a horrible experience)--for any students who qualify according to their placement tests, which are given at the end of the orientation session. Entry into the Program is always painted in the most positive colors, and the rewards are guaranteed for those students who are willing to make the commitments that the Program will ask of them. Application forms and student profiles are distributed by the staff after the PD makes his presentation, and student response to join is always

enthusiastic, averaging 75% or better of all the students attending. The IN staff follows up on the PD's speech by acting as group leaders for all the assembled students; the staff takes the new students on tours of the building, explains school operations, and answers specific questions in informal rap sessions. Having a staff of outgoing people, who are friendly and helpful to the group of nervous newcomers, enhances the image of the Program and never fails to attract some previously reluctant students to request IN application forms.

At this point in the orientation, the IN staff administers placement tests. This is the first major assessment activity of the Program and determines which students qualify for the Program. The tests include the comprehension section of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, a grammar placement test developed by the college's English Department, a math test developed by the school's Math Department (test is optional at this point, but is required of all students planning to take math courses), and an in-house accounting test (also optional, but required of all students who plan on taking accounting without completing the business mathematics course first). Students are eligible for IN if their placement scores in reading, grammar, or math require enrollment in Reading 125 (below 9th grade level on the Nelson-Denny), English 197 (below 20 out of 50 on the in-house grammar test), English 101/Reading 126 (below 21 and 27 on the in-house grammar test and exemption from Reading 125), and/or Math 103 (new placement criteria for revised form of math test not yet posted by the Math Department). If students who have requested to be IN students test into one or more of the above courses (as over 90% of them do), they are immediately given an appointment for special IN registration by one of the IN staffers administering the tests. By this method we recruit over 80% of our new IN students each semester. The remainder come from referrals of IN faculty who work general registration, word-of-mouth walk-ins (someone told them about IN but not about attending orientation), and students recruited during the on-going placement testing held during general registration conducted by the IN staff.

Once students have been accepted into the Program, the second stage of assessment begins, most of which is conducted by the PA. In the interim between orientation and actual special registration, the PD and PA review the student profiles and any records (ACT scores, high school transcripts, previous college work) that the student has submitted to the college. Records of placement test scores are kept for future use. Initial attempts to match students with programs take place, though the major work of matching takes place at the actual special registration sessions themselves. During the special registration sessions, the students complete all their paperwork, receive their programs, complete the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale (about which there will be more in a moment), and receive a time during regular registration to return to the IN office to pick up their materials to present to the cashier for payment and to receive their student ID's. Even though the students must return twice before classes actually start, they shorten their registration time by nearly two hours working through IN, a fact they only begin to appreciate when they've left the Program.

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale provides the Program staff, particularly the PA, with a research-verified measure of the students' self-image: whether they think they are in control of their lives or not. Scores are measured on a scale ranging from Internal to External, corresponding to the degree of control students think they exercise over their own destinies (high Internal) as opposed to the control outside forces have over their lives (high External). Not surprisingly, non-traditional students such as the clientele of IN exhibit high externality. They are not surprised when they fail, they expect it, and they behave in ways consistent with that expectation (since they believe that nothing they themselves do makes any difference anyway). The PA uses the high externality of IN students to create image-enhancing strategies for use in both the group meetings as well as tutoring sessions. These include group problem-solving, self-guided inquiry into career options, and immediate outcome/programmed learning on

auto-tutorial machines. The problem-solving sessions center around study habits, and students might be asked to bring in a time-expenditure chart one week which serves as an analytical tool for the group on how to set up study schedules. Other students might be sent to the library in small groups to solve a specific research problem, which will then serve as the basis for a Center for the Humanities slide program on effective use of library resources. In all cases, the students are taught to succeed in specific activities and to believe that what they do for themselves does make a difference. They also learn to trust their teachers and advisors.

The combination of effective assessment activities with courses in which students have some chance for success brings the students to a clearer picture of who they are and what they have to do to reach specific objectives in their academic endeavors. Because we've found out who they are--in their abilities and attitudes--we can offer them an educational experience that they can profit from. And if we're good at it and show them we care about what we're doing, the students will begin to understand us and care about what we're doing too. In addition, if what we're doing is designed in such a way as to be accessible to them, they will begin to be successful in their academic work. Since success in school because of their own efforts is a new experience for most of our students (in 1978, the ACT composite score average for our students put them in the 4th percentile nationally), and most graduated in the bottom half of their high school graduating classes), the IN regimen puts them on the road to self-knowledge and self-confidence. The Locus of Control scores move toward the Internal side, they stay in school well beyond the school average, and they stay free from probation as they select reasonable majors in reasonable academic and vocational programs. This happens because students with individual needs do not have the right to fail; they have the right to an education that has been designed to meet their individual needs.

The final point to be made in this analysis involves failure. What happens when it happens? What happens when the strategies fail or the hazards of city

survival intrude in the sanctuary of education or failure addition is rooted in out-and-out inability? We become the referral agency that still tries to serve our students' needs by directing them wherever they can best be served--the Counseling Department for personal guidance, the Career Guidance Center affiliated with Chicago City-Wide College and the Illinois Employment Service, vocational rehabilitation centers around the city, and so on. We use all our resources to bring self-respect and respect for the college into the lives of our students. We are educating them and implanting in them a respect for education that they might bring to their friends and relatives. In this way we help our college fulfill its mission as a comprehensive community college.

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